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U.S. Discounts a Castro Link to Cocaine

The U.S. government has no evidence to substantiate a network television report that Cuban President Fidel Castro is linked to a Florida banking firm allegedly involved in cocaine trafficking, federal law enforcement sources said yesterday.

Rep. Lester Wolff (D-N.Y.) said Sunday on the program "60 Minutes" (CBS, WTOP) that Castro provided part of the money to start the firm, WFC, based in Coral Gables, Fla.

Wolff, chairman of the House Committee on Narcotics Abuse, also alleged that WFC, under Castro's direction, provided \$10 million of a \$100

million loan in 1975 to Colombia, a major source of illegal cocaine.

Although Wolff said the loan "facilitated" the cocaine trade, neither he nor others appearing on the program gave any explanation of how or offered any evidence to back up the allegations about Castro.

Reliable law enforcement sources said yesterday that the program was correct in stating that WFC is being investigated as part of a federal probe into illegal money-laundering operations in the Miami area.

However, the sources added, Castro's name has not figured in the investigation, except for some scattered, unreliable, hearsay allegations that

the Cuban government might have a connection with WFC, whose president, Guillermo Hernandez Cartaya, is a Cuban exile.

It was possible, the sources said, that some of these allegations might have been mentioned in intelligence reports shared by Federal agencies with Wolff's committee. If so, they added, the allegations should have been labeled in the reports as unreliable rumors.

In New York, a spokesperson for CBS News said, "We have talked to sources within those agencies [the agencies mentioned in the Sunday night broadcast] who confirm what Congressman Wolff says."

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